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22 March 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT : Aerial Reconnaissance of Communist China

1. Attached is copy of Memorandum for the Record of a discussion Mr. McCone had with Secretary McNamara and Secretary Vance on 18 March. Also attached is a memorandum for me forwarding the prior reference for necessary action.
2. After informal discussion of this matter with Colonel Ledford, I telephoned Colonel Geary who stated that he had been called on to prepare a briefing on this subject for Secretary Vance and that he was in the process of discussing the matter with Dr. McMillan. Geary said he intended to stick entirely to the support phase of the activity and, if operational considerations came up, would suggest that Secretary Vance be briefed by Colonel Ledford. Geary said that already available on Okinawa was fuel, communications, an operations building and an adequate runway. Not available was a hangar or any other means of putting the birds under cover. Geary felt that a 1 October readiness date would be the earliest that could be met. Geary said he had also been asked to look into the matter of putting the drivers back into blue suits but allowing them to keep the same rate of compensation. We both agreed that the pilots would not accept any such rigged-up deal like this even if it were possible. Geary said that going into this whole operation on a temporary basis should be looked upon as only the initial move and that we should make the facility permanent. He said we are talking about several million dollars of facilities. Geary also said it is a fallacy to think the pilots have more protection if they have a uniform on.
3. I then placed a call for Secretary Vance but was unable to get through. Later in the day, Geary informed me that he, too, had been unable to see Vance so he had written a memorandum to him which covered the following general points:

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The operation is feasible from Okinawa. Three aircraft could be moved in and be operational in 60 days, but this would be on a crash basis and would result in a virtual shutdown of [redacted] October 15th would be the earliest possible operation date under the present extensive modification program. Modification and testing of the entire facility to assure necessary range and operational readiness would take this length of time. During this period, the Okinawa Base would be resurveyed. Geary would want to add a new hangar, increase size of the fuel farm, start processing and move the additional support personnel required, military or otherwise, adjust SAC tanker assets to provide the 7-11 figure for three refuelings and add to the aids as necessary. Geary estimates the initial airlift cost would be approximately \$1-1/2 million for essential equipment to set up the program and there would be a continual annual airlift cost of \$2 million. Air Force support of M & O funds would be about \$200,000.00 a month. The additional hangar would cost a million dollars.

That was the gist of Geary's memorandum to Vance as reported to me by Geary. Geary also reported that the Air Force Judge Advocate General said it was legally impossible to reimburse the pilots over and above normal military pay if they returned to their blue suit status. It took two pages for this Judge to say that, but the answer was an unequivocal "no, it cannot be done."

4. I subsequently talked to Secretary Vance and offered to give him a briefing on the operational aspects of making these flights from Okinawa.

ACTION to DD/S&T: Please arrange with Secretary Vance's office to give this briefing as soon as possible.

5. In going into this matter and taking all the various actions necessary and indicated by this memorandum and by Mr. McCone's memorandum of conversation, the following should be borne in mind:

(a) A decision has been made to take all the necessary preparatory steps to put into Okinawa whatever construction and related arrangements are needed to be able to operate the OXCART in operational flights over Communist China. (If it is considered essential to

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(b) No decision has been taken to move any OXCARTS to Okinawa. This decision would probably be made by the President.

(c) No decision has been taken to unsheepdip, or to return to blue suits, CIA pilots. This decision would probably be made by the President.

(d) No decision has been taken to fly the OXCART operationally over Communist China. This decision can only be made by the President.

(e) No decision has been taken as to whether or not the aircraft and pilots would be military with military markings and military pilots, or civilian with deniable characteristics of aircraft and pilot. This decision can only be taken by the President.

(f) No decision has been taken as to whether the operations will be conducted by SAC or CIA. This decision can only be taken by the President in light of the several considerations noted above.

5. There is an anomaly here that beggars analysis. Vance and McNamara have been adamant in opposing the use of military U-2's and U. S. military pilots over Communist China. They have been harder against this than the State Department. Yet, at the same time, they now propose utilizing military aircraft and military pilots in a much less deniable and much more flagrant violation of normal overflight procedures. It should be borne in mind that the President and only the President can make the decision as to whether we will use U. S. military pilots, presumably with Air Force markings, or civilian pilots, presumably with no markings. This obviously is a decision of the greatest importance involving national policy at the highest level.

6. Finally, if the operation is to be conducted secretly, whether or not it is to be denied or deniable, then the Agency position is that only the Agency can properly conduct the operation. If the operation

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is to be conducted on a plausibly deniable basis or on a "blank stare -- never-heard-of-it" basis, even though it is apparent that the Chinese will be aware of the overflights, then it is Agency position that the operation can be conducted in this manner only by the Agency.

7. Until such time that the President has made the conscious and firm decision that the United States Government will admittedly overfly Communist China in military aircraft with military pilots (I am talking here about OXCART) then it is the firm position of the Agency that any other overflights over denied territory will be conducted by the Agency in accordance with past procedures.

8. Please review this memorandum and Mr. McCone's memorandum in great detail and give me a listing of the various actions you propose to take.

(Signed) Marshall S. Carter

Marshall S. Carter
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Director

Attachments

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